

Crime Prevention Tips for Seniors

From Crime and Violence Prevention Center – California Attorney General's Office

Crime prevention is everyone's responsibility, not just a job for law enforcement. Seniors can learn how to protect themselves from crime by following these simple, common-sense, suggestions. Share these tips with your neighbors and friends, too, and make it tough for criminals to work in your neighborhood.

At Home...

- Always keep your doors and windows locked. Install dead-bolt locks on all doors.
- Keep your home well-lit at night, inside and out, and keep your curtains closed at night.
- Install a peephole in your front door so you can see callers without opening the door.
- Ask for proper identification from delivery men or strangers. Don't be afraid of asking – if they are legitimate they won't mind.
- Never give your credit card, phone card, social security, or bank account number to anyone over the phone unless you've placed the call.
- If a stranger asks to use your telephone, offer to place the call for him/her yourself. Never let a stranger in to your home.
- Do not leave notes on your door when you are gone, and DO NOT hide your keys under the mat or in other conspicuous places.
- Never give out information over the phone indicating you are alone or that you won't be home at a certain time.
- When you are gone for more than a day, make sure your home looks or sounds occupied – use automatic timers to turn on lights and a radio or television.

While You're Out...

- Carry your purse very close to you – don't dangle it from your arm. Also, never leave your purse in a shopping cart.
- Don't carry more cash than is necessary. Many grocery stores now accept checks and automatic teller cards instead of cash.
- Avoid walking alone at night. Try to have a friend accompany you in high risk areas - even during the daytime.
- Do not carry weapons – they may be used against you.
- Have your paychecks or government checks sent directly to your bank account – many banks have senior citizens discounts.
- Never withdraw money from your bank accounts for anyone except YOURSELF. Be wary of con artists and get-rich schemes that probably are too good to be true.

In Your Car...

- Keep your gas tank full and your engine properly maintained to avoid breakdowns.
- Always lock your car doors, even when you're inside and keep your windows rolled up. Driving with windows closed also improves gas mileage.
- Lock packages and other valuables in the trunk. Do not leave them on the back seat or on the floor of the car where potential thieves can see them.
- When you return to your car, always check the front and back seat before you get in.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- If your car breaks down, pull over to the right as far as possible, raise the hood, and wait inside the car for help. Do not get out of the car or roll down the window until the police arrive.

If You Are A Victim At Home...

- If you arrive at home and suspect a stranger may be inside, DO NOT GO IN. Leave quietly and call 911 to report the crime.
- If you are attacked on the street, make as much noise as possible by calling for help or blowing a whistle. Do not pursue the attacker. Call 911 and report the crime as soon as possible.
- If you have been swindled or conned, report the crime to your local police or district attorney's office. Con artists count on their victim's reluctance to admit they've been duped, but if you delay, you help them get away. Remember, if you never report the crime, they are free to cheat others again and again, and you have no chance of ever getting your money back.

What You Can Do To Help:

- Work to change conditions that hurt your neighborhood – Volunteer as a citizen patroller, tutor for children, office aide in the police or fire department, mentor for teens, or escort for individuals with disabilities.
- Contact your local American Association Of Retired Persons (AARP) for more information on how to get involved in other community programs.